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E43

ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VC-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NSAE-00
	OIC-00	PA-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	ECA-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/000W		

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R 251222Z MAR 04  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5565  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
NSC WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001011

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS USAID DCHA/OTI FOR RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2014  
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, KDEM, VE  
SUBJECT: GOV DAMAGE CONTROL OVERWHELMED BY BARRAGE OF  
INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM

REF: A. CARACAS 560  
B. CARACAS 634

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for reasons 1.4  
(B) and (D)

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Summary  
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4. (U) During his weekly televised program, March 14, Chavez also denied that the government had abused human rights and

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accused members of the opposition for protest-related deaths.

"There is no proof (of human rights violations), and if there was, you know that my government would investigate." Chavez said that his government "was forced to act to defend the Constitution, the law, and about all, public safety."

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6. (U) Chavez had previously attacked domestic human rights NGOs during his February 15 weekly televised program. Chavez accused three prominent and respected Venezuelan human rights NGOs (Cofavic, Provea, and Red de Apoyo) of collaborating with the Washington-based Center for Justice and International Law to "threaten a legitimately established government." He claimed the NGOs received funds from the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which he accused of being a tool for USG meddling in Venezuelan politics. Cofavic and two other Venezuelan organizations denounced Chavez's statements as "a threat to the work of human rights organizations in Venezuela." Amnesty International agreed in its February 18 statement and demanded Chavez retract the allegations.

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International Criticism: Human Rights  
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7. (U) --The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

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(IACHR) released a report March 18 that covers events up to October 2003. It identified a "clear weakness" in institutions, criminal impunity, and a growing concentration of power in the executive.

--Human Rights Watch criticized the GOV's denial of human rights violations March 14, stating that testimony and evidence collected by group prove National Guardsmen are "unquestionably" guilty of torture, including electrocutions and burnings. Jose Miguel Vivanco also blamed "agents of the state" for nine deaths and warned the Chavez administration that it was "grave danger" of losing its democratic legitimacy. He added that the majority of the detained were set free and denied any knowledge of "forced disappearances."

--On March 12 the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) accused the GOV of systematic violations of freedom of expression and press and of attacking any media that "doesn't bend to his (Chavez's) conditions," which provokes attacks from Chavez supporters. It also denounced the GOV's noncompliance with a "constitutional, democratic and electoral solution" to Venezuela's political crisis and expressed concern about recent Supreme Court statements discounting the authority of international institutions and the "absolute right" of freedom of expression.

--The IACHR included Venezuela in a list of five American countries with serious human rights concerns March 12. It reiterated concerns about protest related deaths, injuries, and detentions.

--On March 8, Reporters Without Borders requested the government condemn attacks on journalists and order an investigation of 10 alleged attacks on journalists by GOV forces since February 27.

--On March 6, the International Society for Human Rights and the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, two prominent European NGOs, issued a communique criticizing the GOV for "subterfuges and false arguments ... historically used by other despots that ended up killing millions of human being with the sole purpose of perpetuating themselves in power." The statement calls for international public opinion to "categorically reject" the GOV's human rights abuses.

--Human Rights Watch March 5 urged "a thorough investigation into allegations that state security forces have beaten and abused detained protesters." The statement also raised concerns about opposition vandalism and violence and urged

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both sides to pursue peaceful avenues of reconciliation.

--On March 3, Reporters Without Borders protested the failure of the GOV to prevent attacks on about a dozen journalists since February 27, implying that GOV security forces were to blame. "If the media take sides against President Chavez, on occasion outrageously, this can still never justify the use of force against their reports."

--A March 4 statement from Amnesty International criticized the GOV for "excessive use of force and detentions."

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International Criticism: Recall Referendum  
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8. (U) --OAS Observer Mission Chief Fernando Jaramillo released a letter March 19 responding to March 18 comments from National Electoral Council (CNE) President Francisco Carrasquero criticizing the OAS and Carter Center electoral observers as biased toward the opposition. The letter outlined the OAS observer mission based on the May 29 agreement, the OAS's objective and successful history observing electoral processes, and the GOV's invitation to observe the petition campaign and the verification process. Jaramillo asked the CNE President to share proof of OAS bias and state that the OAS observation delegation would leave Venezuela if asked to do so by the CNE. (Note: On March 23 Jaramillo met with the CNE for a very tense two hours. The CNE majority said the OAS/TCC were biased by applying independent criteria to the verification process. They did not, however, ask the OAS/TCC observers to leave.)

--On March 15, the Group of Friends of Venezuela released a communique to express its concern about delays in the recall process. They released a similar statement March 5.

--The European Union March 4 lamented the protest violence and expressing solidarity with the OAS's March 2 opinion that the CNE was using technicalities to force signatures into a revalidation process.

--The OAS and Carter Center released a joint statement March 2 expressing disagreement with the CNE's decision to send over 800,000 recall signatures to a revalidation process.

--The European Union expressed its concern over the delay of the signature authentication process February 23. In a statement, the EU welcomed the CNE's February 28 deadline for

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completing the process and emphasized "the will of the signers must be respected."

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